

Undergraduate Usage of Mobile Phones and Its Implication of School Application

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Abstract

The study is a survey research intended to find out undergraduate usage of mobile phones and its implication of school application. The colloquium population is 27,650 at which two hundred and thirty eight undergraduate students were randomly selected from two universities in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A questionnaire on “current trends in mobile phone usage among adolescents” was used for the study. The instrument was validated and tested reliable. Five research questions were formulated to guide the study. The researcher as well as ten research assistants personally administered the questionnaire. The questionnaire forms were collected on the spot and so there was a hundred percent rate of return. It was discovered that nearly all the undergraduate students own mobile phones and majority consider it very useful. Several reasons were advanced for owning a mobile phone by students. These include; for mobility, emergency, e-mails and short message service, self assurance, improved social status, for fashion, loading information, social network and malpractice. The features commonly used by students apart from sending and receiving calls is the short message service. The implications of mobile phone usage by students on school administration are: it is an object of distraction, encourage laziness as students now browse instead of going to the library, an object for examination malpractice and several other vices. Recommendations were made to check the use of mobile phones by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Mobile phone, Cellular technology, school administration.

Introduction

Herling and Peterson (2000) opined that with the commencement of electromagnetic telegraph by Samuel Morse in his experiment started the production of cell phones in 1832 with an experimental version in 1835. Morse on October 10, 1842 in New York laid wires. This is because he sought to demonstrate that an marine cable could send out signals and part of the circuit was underwater. However, a passing ship pulled up the cables prior to the completion of this demonstration. Without the cable passing the telegraph signals through the water Morse continued with the experiment. This brought about the concept of wireless conduction. Thus, the earliest telegraph gadget to send messages by electricity was discovered by Samuel Morse.

Kitchenham and Pflieger (2002) further narrated that in 1843, an experienced and skilled analytical chemist by name Michael Faraday commenced an exhaustive research into whether space could conduct electricity using the concepts or principle already uncovered by Morse. James Maxwell Clerk in 1864, released a paper supporting that light magnetism and electricity are related and the first to communicate using the wireless via the atmosphere was Dr. Manhion Looms of Virginia in 1865. He transmitted telegraphs messages at a distance of above 18 miles between 1866 and 1873.

The mobile phone was invented in 1973 by Martin Cooper. Cooper was the former general manager for the systems division of Motorola and the first person to make a call on a portable cellular phone (Magner 2004). In 1977, cell phones became very public and in 1988, several technologies were embedded into the systems.

The cell phones record the introduction of interconnection between public switched phone systems to radio transceivers from earliest times of transmitting conversation. The earliest systems used heavy, high electric power consuming equipment and reinforced just a few conversations at the same time. Today, programmed and pervasive use of mobile phones for voice and data are allowed by Cellular technology and microprocessor control system.

Dillman (2009) noted that the transmission of speech by radio has a long and varied history. During the Second World War, radio telephony link especially with the automobiles was developed. In 1940, Motorola developed the “walkie – Talkie”. In 1942 St Louis introduced the mobile telephone service. In 1964, the mobile telephone services were improved to have radio channels. These systems have undergone several technological developments to its recent form. Wireless technologies have become notable and useful to mankind. Murvitadhi (2009) explained that the recent improvements in computer and embedded systems have enabled portable power – aware devices with sufficiently high computing capability. The combination of these technology advancements triggered the idea of mobile computing, which combines high bandwidth wireless network infrastructures with lightweight processing clients to permit different types of new digital services such as e-mail, web access, video conferencing, etc. The current popular device that is widely used and has incorporated these mobile computing features is the cell phone.

In Nigeria, cell phones were introduced into the country during the Obasanjo regime in 2000. Earlier,

cell phones were an exclusive right of the rich. Mobile phones were embraced by virtually all Nigerians irrespective of age or level of literacy. Adesina (2006) stated that the use of mobile phones in Nigeria has become not just a means of communication but status symbol as the society look down on anyone that do not own a mobile phone. In the villages and most rural areas, the mobile phone is considered a mark of affluence and a distinguishing factor between the rich and the poor.

Ojo (2006) noted that despite the fact that the mobile phones have become very indispensable in the day to day communication, it has become an object of worry to most parents and school administrators. In Nigeria, cases of kidnapping are often perfected through the mobile phones. Nwanne (2001), observed that mobile phones affect students reading habit.

The purpose of this survey is to investigate the way mobile phones are used by undergraduate students in Nigeria Universities. The survey is designed to answer the following questions:

1. How often are the mobile phones being used among University students in Nigeria?
2. What are the reasons for these students to have mobile phones?
3. Which mobile phones features are desirable?
4. What is the implication of students usage of mobile phones on school administration?

The survey was conducted using in-person delivery technique, which students in the target university are approached in person and asked for their participation in a questionnaire. Survey technique guarantee that each respondent comprehends each one of the questions and answer them appropriately. A general delivery protocol was made to ensure efficient and common delivery approach to respondent. The procedure can be summarized as follows;

1. Approach a person in the target University and ask whether he/she is a student of the University.
2. If yes, then an informed consent statement is given and the person is asked whether he/she would be willing to participate in the survey. The person is also informed that he/she can ask any question at any time.
3. If yes, then the questionnaire booklet is given.
4. The process finishes after the respondents complete the questionnaire and all his/her questions have been addressed.

The delivery protocol is used throughout the survey process.

The questionnaire "Current trends in mobile phone usage among social studies students" was used.

Validation of the instrument was done with the use of four experts in information technology in Niger Delta University and tested for reliability using the test-retest method using twenty students that were not part of the students selected for the study were used. The result was analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and it was established at 0.85 which shows that the instrument is reliable. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher and research assistants. The questionnaire were collected on the spot hence the 100% rate of return. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyse data collected.

The analysis of data shows that most undergraduate student from years very often uses mobile phones. Out of the 61 students sampled in year 1 to 1v 45.9% very often uses the mobile phones, 16.4% used it often, 4.9% use it rarely and 32.8% use it very rarely. A greater percentage of the students in years 1 to 1v use the mobile phone very often.

In ranking the reasons for having mobile phones, the following were identified in a descending order: usefulness in emergency (2nd), self assurance (3rd), e-mail capability (4th), to raise one's social status (5th), to search for information (6th), for fashion (7th), to browse (8th) for malpractice (9th) and for social networking (10th).

It is evidence that most students tell lies to their colleagues and lecturers through the mobile phones, and it is also an already made instrument for examination malpractice. Most students do not attend the University library as the mobile phone has become a tool to browse certain vital information. Most students engage in social network and facebook chatting endlessly in place of their academics. Apart from the fact that the mobile phone is expensive to maintain, it has taken the place of purchase of books by students. Mobile phones act as serious distraction to most students. All these pose serious problems to school administration

Conclusions

Mobile phones have become indispensable among Nigerian undergraduate students. Virtually all university students own a mobile phone irrespective of gender, age or religion. However, some of the students have been using the mobile phones before admission but very many saw it as imperative to own a mobile phone as an undergraduate student.

Several motives were advanced for why students own mobile phones. Some saw it as a very mobile communication gadget. It is essential for emergencies, it could be used for e-mails and SMS messages, some students believe that owning a mobile phone is a social symbol as many believe that it is a must to acquire one especially the expensive ones, it is also an instrument for self assurance, the dressing of a student is not complete if a mobile phone is not added. Some students consider owning a mobile phone as a thing of fashion. Although,

some students consider it as an opportunity to download information. It can also be used for social networking as well as an already made electronic device for examination malpractice.

So many students believed that the mobile phone is very necessary and most useful. Among the features in the mobile phone, apart from sending and receiving calls, the SMS is the most popular and widely used feature. Playing of music, video conferencing, camera upload, chatting, internet browsing, alarm, calculator and electronic phone book are also widely used by students.

On the implication of the mobile phone on school administration. Mobile phones have been used by students to tell a lot of lies to their colleagues and lecturers. Flimsy excuses about absence from lectures non submission of assignments and non attendance to certain school activities. The mobile phone is also used for examination malpractices. Most vital portions of the notes are saved electronically in the phones and retrieved during examinations. Most objectives answers are sent through SMS to other students during examination. Most students have abandoned the university library as they now browse through their mobile phones to get information. Most students agreed that they spend much time on chatting on the social network especially the facebook and 2Go. A lot of money is spent on the airtime and the mobile phones cause a lot of distraction to students.

Recommendations

Despite the indispensability of the mobile phones to university students, based on the findings of the survey, the following recommendations are made.

- Students should be encouraged to own mobile phones
- A special orientation programme should be organized for fresh students on the usage of the mobile phone in school.
- Students engagement in free night calls should be discouraged.
- Students should be discouraged from the use of mobile phones during examination.
- Student use of cell phones during lectures shouldn't be allowed as this is often a major distraction
- Students must be encouraged to go to the university library by lecturers instead of depending on their phones for loading information
- School administrators must discourage students from using cell phone as objects of fashion, such as hanging ear piece on the neck, using big headphones, etc.

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